



Kurt Villads Jensen, Kirsi Salonen & Helle Vogt (eds), *Cultural Encounters during the Crusades*, University Press of Southern Denmark: Odense 2013. 329 pp.

*Cultural Encounters during the Crusades* is a book one takes up with high expectations but lays down with somewhat mixed feelings. Few readers will be familiar with both – or all – sides of the Crusades and will undoubtedly read the articles collected in this volume to their profit. On the other hand, one has an awkward feeling that the writers are equally ill at ease with those sides of the theme which do not fall under their specific discipline. This is perhaps to be expected – few scholars are nowadays familiar with Latin, Arabic and Byzantine Greek – yet instead of articles discussing the encounters from one side only one would have welcomed articles that discussed them from both sides at the same time. This, though, is partly made good by the whole collection giving glimpses from both – or all – sides, even though the articles do not very often come into discussion with each other.

Many of the individual articles are good and well worth reading. They will perhaps be of most use to readers who are not specialists in that particular field. From my own, Arabist viewpoint, at least, I found several of the non-Arabist articles very revealing and was able to benefit from them.

Perhaps the best article is that by Paul E. Chevedden ('The view of the Crusades from Rome and Damascus', pp. 27–53), which is the only one really to discuss authors and viewpoints from both Muslim and Christian sides, contrasting, as the subtitle continues, 'the geo-strategic and historical perspectives of Pope Urban II and 'Alī ibn Ṭāhir al-Sulamī'.

Two of the 'Arab-Islamic' articles, those by Jonathan Phillips ('The travels of Ibn Jubayr and his view of Saladin', pp. 75–90) and Robert Irwin ('The Arabists and Crusader studies in the twentieth century', pp. 283–298) are very readable and enjoyable, but still remain rather general and have little new to contribute. Phillips's article will, undoubtedly, be highly interesting for a Mediaevalist ignorant of the Arab-Islamic context of the Crusades, but for an Arabist its contents are rather familiar. It makes good reading, of course, but the story is not told for the first time here. Irwin takes up two towering figures in Crusader studies from the Arabist side and shows that some of their preconceived notions have affected the general view of how the Muslim reaction to the Crusades has been seen. Here again we tread on familiar ground.

Osman Latiff's 'Qur'anic imagery, Jesus and the creation of a pious-warrior ethos in the Muslim poetry of the anti-Frankish jihad' (pp. 135–51) is very different in tenor from these two articles. It takes a more specific research question and would seem to

open up new vistas. However, the reader is disappointed. Latiff reads Arabic poems from the period of the Crusades as jihad-oriented. Certainly, many verses mention, or allude to, the jihad against the Crusaders. In a few, there may even be some real jihad sentiment, but what Latiff fails to mention is that every ruler of the time was addressed in similar terms: they were the heroes, while their enemies, whether Crusaders or others, were the fiends. God was, of course, on the poet's patron's side. The Crusader poems do not stand alone in Arabic poetry, but fall nice and squarely within the conventions of the genre. It is precarious to claim any special meaning for expressions that are commonly also used elsewhere.

Latiff's unfortunate habit of jumping to conclusions without proving his point and making the evidence bear a weight it is not equal to, may be exemplified by just one example. On p. 143 he writes on a poet: 'The poet's diction reveals the influence of the Qur'an on his celebratory poem; the poem was intended to stimulate a collective consideration of God's divine "design" with His servants'. The first part is true enough and easily discernible, but how does one arrive at the conclusion in the second part? As thousands and thousands – if not millions – of Arabic poems 'reveal the influence of the Qur'an' in their diction, should we take all of them as being 'intended to stimulate a collective consideration of God's divine "design" with His servants'? If not, what makes this an exemption, a special case? Except that it suits Latiff's argument to read these specific verses in this light.

The last 'Arab-Islamic' article is by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen who discusses 'The Crusades in Arab film and TV: The case of Baybars' (pp. 299–312). The article is interesting for those who (like myself) do not follow Arabic TV productions. It does give an insight into how the Arabic-speaking audience nowadays encounters the Crusades and their protagonists, especially from the Muslim side. It is a pity, though, that Skovgaard-Petersen does not go into any in-depth contrastive study of Muslim and Christian films, but restricts himself more or less to retelling the story-line of mainly one TV series on Baybars.

From a Latin and Western side the collection offers us articles by Kurt Villads Jensen ('Cultural encounters and clash of civilizations: Huntington and modern crusading studies', pp. 15–26), Helen J. Nicholson ('The hero meets his match: Cultural encounters in narratives of wars against Muslims', pp. 105–18), Sini Kangas ('First in prowess and faith: The great encounter in twelfth-century Crusader narratives', pp. 119–34), Bertil Nilsson ('Gratian on pagans and infidels: A short outline', pp. 153–163), Kirsi Salonen ('Unlicensed pilgrims and illegal trade: Late Medieval cultural encounters in the Mediterranean according to the archives of the Apostolic Penitentiary 1458–1464', pp. 165–97), Peter Edbury ('Cultural encounters in the Latin East: John of Jaffa and Philip of Novara', pp. 229–43) and Andrew Jotischky ('Pilgrimage, procession and ritual encounters between Christians and Muslims in the Crusader States', pp. 245–62).

K. Villads Jensen's article introduces us to the theme, rather unnecessarily discussing in passing Samuel Huntington (1927–2008), only to make it clear that he has little to contribute to any serious, scholarly discussion. The main part of the article gives a brief survey of how the West saw the Crusader movement. Nicholson's article gives a brief overview of how Christian sources, especially historical texts and Old French epics, depicted their opponents. Kangas moves basically on the same lines, discussing the knight and his enemy in a mostly descriptive article. Nilsson's contribution takes Gratian's *Decretum* as its starting point in studying the canon law's attitude towards Muslims among others. He discusses the differentiation between *fideles* and *infideles* both in theory and, to some extent, in practice. Edbury culls the legal treatises of John of Ibelin (1215–1266), or Jaffa, and Philip of Novara (ca. 1200–ca. 1270) for cases of

cultural encounters or, more precisely, for evidence of relations between Franks and the indigenous population they ruled. Jotischky uses mainly Latin sources to show how Muslims prayed at the same holy places as Christians, although for other reasons, and even took part in Christian processions, at least as onlookers. These ritual encounters, also documented in Muslim sources, are a nice reminder that religion and the feeling of the sacred could be more of a combining than a dividing feature even at the time of the Crusades.

Christian Høgel's 'One God or two – the rationality behind Manuel I Komnenos' attempted reform of the abjuration formula for converts from Islam' (pp. 199–207), Hubert Kaufhold's 'Der Einfluss des Islams auf die christlich-orientalische Rechtskultur' (pp. 209–28) and Angus Stewart's 'The Armenian kingdom and the Mongol-Frankish encounter' (pp. 263–81) form a group of their own, neither focusing on the Islamic side nor the Latin or Western one, but taking up the viewpoint of Oriental Christians.

Høgel's article ranks among the best in this collection, and I read it with great interest. Its perspective is the Byzantine view on Muslims, and based on a rather common-sounding formula of abjuration, Høgel manages to show that a far more important matter lurks behind it, the perennial question whether the God of the Muslims and the Christians is the same or not, a still ongoing discussion. The article continues Høgel's highly-interesting studies on the anonymous translation of the Qur'ān into Greek.

Kaufhold's article resembles Høgel's in that in both, it is more or less a coincidence that they deal with phenomena that occurred during the Crusades. Whereas Høgel reflects on Byzantine-Muslim relations, Kaufhold studies the influence of Islamic law on Syriac legal literature, showing – though not for the first time – how deeply it was influenced by Islamic law, especially in matters of inheritance. Although not strictly speaking related to the Crusades, this article comes very close to the collection's idea, discussing an almost intimate interaction, or encounter, of Islamic and (in this case Eastern) Christian culture.

Stewart's article turns the spotlight on the last decades of the Crusades and beyond, discussing Armenia's role in between Crusaders, Muslims and Mongols, the last representing a third force, much more alien to the Muslims than the Franks, of whose existence they had been aware of for centuries and who, as Christians, had a defined position in the Islamic worldview. Ultimately, pagan Mongols would become Muslims, but at the time they – and not the Crusaders – represented the real threat to Islamic culture. The Armenians had a unique but precarious position between the four powerful actors of the time (Crusaders and the West, Byzantium, Muslims and the Mongols). Not being a specialist in this field, I cannot say how commonly known the points are that are raised by Stewart, but for me the article made delightful reading.

In this collection, Torben Kjersgaard Nielsen's article 'Saints, sinners & civilisers – or converts, cowards & conquerors: Cultural encounters in the Medieval Baltic' (pp. 55–74 – alliteration is always great fun, but it should not be overdone) stands rather forlorn, finding some support only in Janus Møller Jensen's article. I read it with pleasure and to my benefit, though it did occur to me whether a specialist in Medieval Baltic history would find anything new in it. Perhaps he would, though. Janus Møller Jensen's 'King Erik Emune (1134–1137) and the Crusades: The Impact of crusading ideology on early twelfth-century Denmark' (pp. 91–104) uses Scandinavian sources, but focuses on the Oriental Crusades and thus falls more in line with the majority of the other articles.

The collection is edited in a satisfactory way, except for the transliteration of Arabic, which varies from one article to another. Hence, e.g., Phillips writes Usama ibn Munqidh, Irwin and the Index write Usamah ibn Munqidh and Edbury writes Usama Ibn Munqidh. Chevedden does not mention this name, but had he done so, he would probably have used the (more exact) form Usāma ibn Munqidh. In addition, Latiff's transliteration is idiosyncratic and often erratic. A systematization would sorely have been needed, beginning with the decision whether to use diacritical marks or not. Otherwise the editors have done their work, although they might have informed their authors that a binary title of evocative heading and descriptive subheading is not necessarily always the only possibility and the word 'encounter' need not be there in the title, as long as the text itself discusses encounters.

The collection is open to some criticism and there are details that might have been done better, but all considered, the collection is worth reading and provides plenty of food for thought.

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